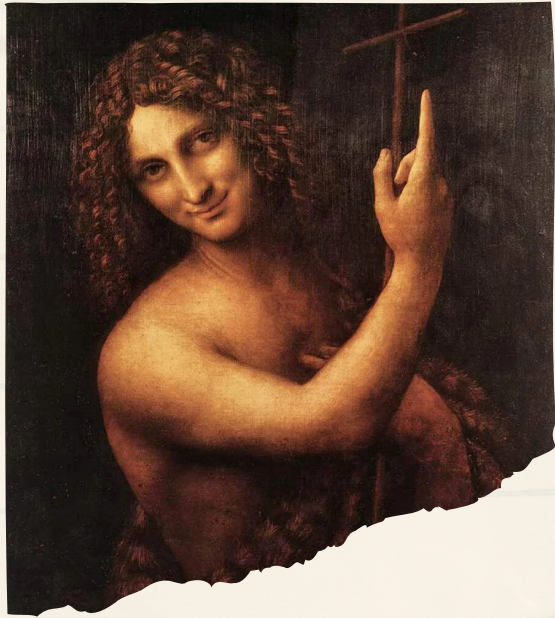


Good First.

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time



January 18, 2026



JOHN 1: 29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

LITANY OF BELOVEDNESS

by Sarah Kroger

The response is: Deliver me, Jesus

- From the belief that I am worthless
- From the belief that I am not good enough
- From the belief that I am defined by my past
- From the belief that I am broken and will never be whole
- From the belief that I am only as good as my accomplishments
- From the belief that I am a failure
- From the belief that I am not gifted in any way
- From the belief that I am alone
- From the belief that I can't change or grow
- From the belief that I am unwanted
- From the belief that I am undesirable
- From the belief that I am unlovable
- From the belief that I am what others think of me
- From the lie of perfectionism
- From the trap of comparison

The response is: Jesus, help me to believe it

- That I am your beloved child
- That I am precious in your sight
- That I am wanted
- That I am who You say I am
- That I am delighted in
- That I am chosen
- That I am a work in progress
- That I am never alone
- That through you, I am capable of love
- That through you, I am capable of healing & wholeness
- That I belong
- That I am not a mistake
- That I was made in Your image
- That You have a plan for my life
- That You are holding me & leading me
- That I am known, seen, & loved just as I am

Father, thank you for your great, unending love. In You, I am seen. In You, I am heard. In You, I am known. In You, I am loved. Today, I choose to embrace the reality of Your love for me. Today, I choose to own my belovedness. Amen

REFLECTION

In this week's readings, we are reminded who God says we are and who Jesus truly is. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord names His servant—chosen, formed, and sent not only to gather Israel, but to be a light to the nations. St. Paul echoes this identity in his greeting to the Corinthians, reminding them—and us—that we are called by God, made holy in Christ Jesus, and strengthened by grace and peace.

The Gospel brings this calling into sharp focus through the witness of John the Baptist. Standing at the Jordan, John recognizes Jesus for who He truly is and responds with humility and awe: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John knows his place. He is not the Savior. He is a witness, pointing beyond himself to the One who "ranks ahead" of him—because Jesus existed before him, before all things. Jesus is not merely another prophet; He is the Son of God and the Lamb who saves.

Each time we gather for Mass, we hear John's words again just before Communion. They are not routine words; they are a profound act of faith. We proclaim that the One we are about to receive is truly the Lamb of God, the only One who can take away our sins and give us new life. If we truly believe this, it changes everything.

This week's readings invite us to examine whether Jesus truly "ranks ahead" in our own lives. One practical way to do this is by looking honestly at the first fruits we offer God—our time, our resources, and what we allow to shape our minds and hearts. Do our schedules, spending, and media choices reflect someone who believes Jesus is Lord? Or do they look no different from the world around us?

Like John the Baptist, we are called not to draw attention to ourselves, but to point to Christ. We do this through lives rooted in prayer, shaped by the Eucharist, and open to ongoing conversion. When we fall short—and we will—God's mercy meets us there. We can always begin again. As Saint Ignatius reminds us, even the desire to desire God is something we can offer Him.

Strengthened by the Lamb of God we receive this week, may we have the courage to live as His servants and witnesses. And in all we do, may our lives quietly and faithfully say, with John: "Behold the Lamb of God."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- **Witness and Recognition** – John the Baptist recognized Jesus and boldly proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God." Where have you recognized Jesus at work in your life recently, and how—if at all—have you given witness to Him through your words or actions?
- **God First: Examining Our Lives** – The reflection invites us to look honestly at the "first fruits" of our time, money, and media. Which of these areas most clearly shows that God is first in your life? Which area most needs growth or change?
- **Ranking Ahead** – John says that Jesus "ranks ahead" of him. In your daily schedule and priorities, what tends to rank ahead of God? What is one concrete change you could make this week to let Christ take first place?
- **Strengthened by the Eucharist** – Each week we hear, "Behold the Lamb of God," just before receiving Communion. How does (or could) receiving the Eucharist shape the way you live, choose, and witness to Christ beyond Mass?
- **Pointing Others to Christ** – John knew he was not the Savior—his role was to point others to Jesus. In your family, school, workplace, or community, what is one practical way you can help others recognize Christ through your example, encouragement, or invitation?